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COUNTY OF NEW MADRID )

### PROBABLE CAUSE STATEMENT

I, **Sergeant J. S. Stoelting**, upon my oath, and under penalties of perjury, state as follows:

1. I am a Missouri Highway Patrol Investigator and have been employed in law enforcement for twenty-five years.
2. I have probable cause to believe: Melvin Ray Hufford of Tallapoosa, Missouri, date of birth April 9, 1977, [REDACTED] no known address, committed a **felony**.

**The probable cause is as follows:**

On Wednesday, January 25, 2006, Teresa Butler was reported missing from her residence. Her two small children were found home alone when her husband, Gary Dale Butler returned home from work around 0930 hours. Mr. Butler checked with all his family members and her place of work to try and find her. Teresa was not located. Mr. Butler also noticed there were some personal items missing from his residence. There was no sign of forced entry nor was there evidence of a struggle. Teresa's purse and cell phone were also missing from the house. Mr. Butler told us he also noticed a Playstation, Nintendo Game Cube, digital camera, Sony video camera and video games were missing from the house. A CD player was also missing from their Jeep, which was parked in the front yard. Mr. Butler also noticed the light bulb on the front porch was unscrewed.

The last person to have seen Teresa was her sister-in-law, Sara Buchanan. Sara had followed Teresa home on the night of the 24th from her house located at 210 Missouri Street in Risco, Missouri. Sara went to Teresa's house to use her scanner to copy some items for work. Sara said they arrived at Teresa's house around 2200 hours. Sara said she was there for a short time, left and went home. Sara said when she left, Teresa told her she was going to give her kids a bath and then go to bed. According to Sara, Teresa had to work the next day and the oldest kid had school. Sara specifically remembers the porch light being on when she left.

On January 25, 2006, the Butler's residence was processed for evidence. During the search, we found Teresa's rings under the edge of the couch. We did not find her purse, cell phone or wallet. We were also advised that Teresa was an amateur photographer and Mr. Butler noticed her digital camera was missing. We photographed the box the camera came in.

Several people were interviewed about Teresa's disappearance. We couldn't identify anyone who had seen or talked to Teresa since January 25, 2006. Several leads were followed up on about information of her disappearance but nothing was ever substantiated.

On March 6, 2007, [redacted] provided information to me about some strange circumstances that occurred the day Teresa began missing. [redacted] said on the day Teresa was reported missing, Melvin Hufford Jr. (Cricket) stopped by her house. [redacted] said she was in bed but her husband [redacted] was up. [redacted] said Cricket came into the house and told [redacted] about how he (Cricket) robbed some guy in Parma and beat him up over a drug debt. [redacted] said she further remembered Cricket saying he had a camcorder and an "EZ shot" camera. [redacted] said [redacted] saw the items but she never did. [redacted] said given the time frame on Teresa's disappearance, she felt Cricket was really talking about Teresa Butler but she was just assuming.

On August 2, 2007, I again interviewed [redacted] and [redacted] independent of each other. [redacted] told us Cricket did come by his house the night before he heard Teresa was missing. Cricket traded [redacted] a digital camera and camcorder for a gram of meth. [redacted] said he looked at the videotape that was in the camcorder. [redacted] described a white female with two small children on the tape. They were wearing shorts and were in a cave or around some large rocks. [redacted] said at some point you can see a white male on the tape. [redacted] said he later showed the tape to his wife and they both thought it might be Teresa on the tape. [redacted] said he confronted Cricket about having something to do with Teresa's disappearance but he denied any knowledge. [redacted] told us he later gave the camera and camcorder to [redacted] and she threw it into a ditch somewhere. [redacted] said he burned the videotape in a burn barrel behind his brother's house. I [redacted] later verified this information and took us to the ditch where she threw the camera and camcorder. The Missouri State Water Patrol conducted a dive operation and located a Sony HI 8 Handycam camcorder. I seized the camcorder and verified it as the same make and model as the camcorder missing from the Butler residence.

In January of 2008, I again interviewed [redacted]. During this interview, she divulged information that her son still had a game station that Hufford traded to [redacted] the night Butler went missing. We went to [redacted]'s residence where I seized a Nintendo game cube, a controller and four video games that Hufford stole from the Butler residence and traded to [redacted]

From 2007 through 2019 several leads were followed up on. Investigators

conducted searches of property and excavations for Butler's remains but we didn't find anything of value. To this date, Butler has not been seen nor have we recovered any human remains that have been identified as being Butler.

Melvin Hufford "Cricket" has been a person of interest in this case from the beginning of this investigation. On April 8, 2019, I again interviewed Melvin Hufford while he was in jail in Pemiscot County, Missouri. I began by reading Hufford his Miranda rights using a Missouri State Highway Patrol Notification and Waiver of rights form. Hufford said he understood his rights and signed the form. Hufford began by telling me after I talked to him while he was in prison years ago that it shook him up. Hufford said he wrote his dad a letter and told him to go to a certain house and look under the sink. Hufford said he told his dad there was an anhydrous tank under the sink but it was the body of Teresa Butler. Hufford's dad later verified this story and told me he in fact saw a body under the kitchen sink in that house but he did not touch or move the body. Hufford told me when he got out of prison he removed Butler's body and destroyed it by burning it and hauling her remains to a ditch.

Hufford told me the night Butler died that he and another male were getting high on methamphetamine with Butler. Hufford said he injected himself and Butler with meth while at Butlers residence. Hufford said as he is enjoying his high, Butler mentions her chest is hurting. Hufford said he goes into the kitchen to get something to drink and when he comes back he sees that Teresa is passed out. Hufford said he didn't feel a pulse so he and the other male "freak out". Hufford said they wrap Butler's body in a tarp where she's taken to a ditch bank and laid out. Hufford said he stole some things from the house to make it look like a "sl[REDACTED] robbery". Hufford said they eventually take Butler's body to his dad's old abandoned house where he hid her body under the kitchen sink cabinet for a couple of years while he was in prison. Hufford said after he got out of prison that's when he took her body to a burn pile and burnt her remains. Hufford told me he crushed up her remaining bones, put them in a bucket and dumped them into a ditch south of Tallapoosa.

Hufford has an extensive felony criminal history. Hufford has been sentenced to prison six (6) different times since 1997. Hufford has several charges for drug possession and distribution, as well as prior weapons offense charges, armed criminal action, assault second degree, tampering with a witness in a felony case. He is currently in jail in Pemiscot County, awaiting trial on charges out of New Madrid County.

I, knowing that false statements on this form are punishable by law, state that the facts contained herein are true.

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Signature

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Date